



Spirit Mail



The Montgomery Paranormal Investigation Group formed in 1935. Over the years they have investigated several hundred ghost sightings and hauntings, and have debunked over 90% of them. However this leaves a significant number of cases where connections to the spirit world may actually exist. During this time they have pioneered much of the new technology used in this field, including photographic techniques unique to the group, providing positive (they say) evidence of the portals by which spirits may be manifest in our world. They are rather secretive concerning the technology, lest the Welsh Cryptozoological Society copy it, and try to steal the glory. Collectors of the Welsh Oddities will already have seen their photograph of the spirit of Ceredig Longhorn, the great ram of Welsh history, in St Drogo's Church. Their studies have led them to frequent visits to some sites, and they have identified and classified these spirits. Some are malignant and more often than not appear as poltergeists, while others appear indifferent towards our world, almost as if though we experience them, they cannot see us. Then there are a few who are not only contactable, but are willing to act as intermediaries between our world and theirs. If this sounds like mediums and séances, which are often very dubious, please read on and hear me out.

In order to fund the development of even more sophisticated and novel equipment the MPIG harnessed this willingness with a rather unique postal system. There will always be people who wish to contact the spirits of the deceased; just as there are those who are willing to take financial advantage of this. The Group devised a postal system by which their clients pay a flat fee, and write a letter to the spirit. A number of the spirits who were contactable agreed to help acting as a postal workers. The letter is sealed within an envelope which the client personally signs across the back, and then addresses it to the deceased with just name and the dates of birth and death. The group ask the client only their barest details - not even their name - just the type of question they may be asking. This is so that the letter can be collected by the most suitable intermediary. The letter then has a stamp affixed, appropriate to the intermediary, and the client is instructed where to leave the letter. In fact the client is instructed to find somewhere in the property or area where the selected intermediary is manifest, and to hide the letter where it may not be seen. They are asked to wait at least two days before returning. When the letter has been answered the stamp on the envelope will have been cancelled. If the cancellation is missing or if the letter itself is missing they are told to return later. The returned envelopes still have the signature intact across the back, but now contain a reply from the deceased. While fake mediums operate by a number of tricks, the replies received by the clients, often contain information seemingly known only to the client and deceased, such as details of a conversation or incident from many years previously, or where an insurance policy may be found. These personal details are invariably correct!

As previously stated the stamps used are specific to each spirit, and do in fact feature them as manifested in our world - just a bit of flattery designed to appeal to the spirits' vanity. Those distributed here are those currently in use and are all valued £20.

Firstly there is The Highwayman of Dolgellau, who terrorised the travellers in the area in the early 18th century. His ghost rides the length of the Dolgellau to Machynlleth road, and has been blamed for traffic accidents there, including the Bala Traction bus tragedy of 1957. The photo of his spirit was taken on a misty morning as he rode across the narrow Minllyn Bridge over the River Dovey; one of his favourite ambush points. He was identified after his death to be Richard 'Meipen' Mawddwy of Nant Mawddwy Hall. He should have been an obvious candidate, being constantly in debt through brandy, debauchery and betting, yet mysteriously always finding the necessary cash just in time to avoid debtor's jail. The ghost appears on the eve of the anniversary of Richard's biggest loss, when he put £1,000 on an old nag at the Oswestry race course. It didn't even come last, but died of old age before it complete the two laps. The Highwayman is used when the client is contacting the deceased on financial matters, or lost items - typically missing life insurance documents.

The monks of St Iago-y-Coes are naturally employed when the letter involves religious matters. The monks were a strict cloistered sect¹ at Cyfronydd Abbey, who shunned contact and communication

¹ The Welsh do seem to have a tendency for sects which go to extremes in austerity. Collectors will recall the stamps of the Elisha Chapel, and Malcolm Pryce in the Aberystwyth stories has given prominence to the Church Sacred Insubordination and the Denunciationists.

with outsiders, or at least outwardly so. They never lasted long enough to experience Henry VIII's Dissolution of the monasteries, the order coming to a sudden end in 1371. A maiden who lived nearby gave birth to a three-legged child, and claimed that the father was one of the monks. Rapidly a rumour spread that the monks all had three legs and this explained their secrecy. Then followed speculation that if the monks had three legs then they could be over-endowed in another area. Pairs of sisters then began to testify in the courts that they were simultaneously seduced by a single monk. Unfounded rumours of further three-legged children, hidden away in attics or abandoned at birth spread. Soon the entire neighbourhood was up in arms and marching on the abbey. The monks were bound and examined. When the locals found the rumours were untrue, unable to accept they were wrong, declared it was witchcraft deceiving their senses and demolished the abbey, burying the monks under the falling masonry. But! You may have seen the Time Team episode where they excavated the skeletons and lo and behold the femur to skull ratio was close to 3:1. The monks appear only when St Iago's Day coincides with a new moon, and they are photographed here using the Group's unique Ulfra-Puce technique recording a form of light radiation that runs parallel to the usual light spectrum.

The Funny Looking or Lost Child of Plas Talygarth appears in the clear panes of glass in an otherwise stained glass window. He is believed to be Tomas Wynnstanley, son of the house owner in 1731, who mysteriously disappeared during a highly competitive game of hide and seek. His appearances are heralded by a child's voice counting down from ten. Those who witness his face say it slowly fades over a minute, Cheshire Cat like. In 1939 a child's skeleton was found in a chimney recess. Tomas is used when the client's letter refers to family matters.

The Lady in the Bath is the most mysterious of the spirits. She haunts room 13 at Gwesty Drosedrych near Llandrindod Wells. She is the ghost of a lady who fell asleep in the bath on an extremely cold February night in 1925, when the hotel heating failed. Her body was found the next morning frozen solid in ice. Her manifestations occur on the coldest night of each winter, and only in near total darkness; guests report feeling her hands clutching them. Re-numbering the room 12A did not stop her appearances. The photograph was taken by another pioneering technique using double polarised dark-lighting at 90 degrees to each other, and special film processing. Letters intercepted by her concern matters of the heart.

The final stamp shows the Curators of St Pinga's Isle. You will recall that this granite outcrop lies, isolated, in the mouth of the Bristol Channel, and has been used over the centuries for quarantine during plagues and similar. Being a Curator was an honorary and hereditary position, and as such was required ensure that, should a village suffer plague, all the inhabitants were exiled safely to St Pinga, and ensure that they only returned when it had expired. Those Curators shown are wearing the fashionable plague doctor's garb of the 17th century, when an outbreak of Tregaron Bog Fever in 1671 necessitated the exile of the villagers of Llandewi-Brefi. As you all know, the beak of the bird-like mask contains herbs to capture the 'bad-air' and purify it when in contact with the victims. During this outbreak though, the exiles decided they should be protected by the herbs and substituted any old weeds. All the Curators succumbed and were buried deep in lead-lined stone coffins. For this reason the spirits are extremely difficult to see or photograph. For the image on the stamp the Group developed a technique where film sensitive only to virtual anti-photons is used. This has not been perfected yet, which explains the over-exposure. The Curators are called on when letters concern matters of health and well-being are left. Used copies of these stamps are the rarest in collections, due to the inaccessibility of the island.

Despite the evidence of the replies pointing towards a definite cross-over between the worlds, there have been attempts to test it scientifically and objectively. But all these fail because the whole process is utterly dependent upon Belief and Faith. Those clients who are sceptical do not receive replies, and thus any scientific tests are doomed to fail, with no replies. In fact one approach taken was to study the replies from those clients who had received replies. When the letters were taken back to the laboratory the paper was found to be blank, with a small amount of greyish dust in the bottom of the envelope.

It is inevitable that some of the replies remain unclaimed. The Group collect those which have been left for several months and try to contact the writer. But some will still remain. You will each have one of these, but what is inside? You can open the letter, but bear in mind that if you are still sceptical there is a chance that the paper inside will be blank, and that opening it will greatly reduce the value. And bear in mind the contents may be quite personal. I leave it to you to decide if you want to open it or leave it intact.